



# Visitor Uses Fact Sheet

## *Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge*

### Overview

Umatilla Refuge received an estimated 68,000 refuge visitors in 2003. The Columbia River Unit's open water areas attract approximately 30% of Refuge visitation, mostly in the form of recreational boating, fishing, and hunting. Of the Refuge units, the McCormack Unit with its scenic auto-tour road, wildlife viewing opportunities and popular hunt program is second in visitor use numbers.

The Whitcomb, Ridge and Paterson Units in Washington state attract a significant amount of interest from local birders, hunters and travelers along State Highway 14.

The Boardman Unit is a small linear area of shoreline and has very little public use aside from hunters and an occasional group fishing the river bank.

**Information on hunting opportunities is provided on the Hunting Fact Sheet and the blue Umatilla Hunting Brochure**

### Public Use Facilities

- ◆ Miles of paved, gravel and dirt roads that allow visitors access to popular hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing areas.
- ◆ Interpretive overlook located on the Ridge Unit
- ◆ Two interpretive overlooks located on the McCormack Unit. One interpretive overlook overlooking the McCormack Sloughs and a



*Mule deer - a popular sight at McCormack Unit. Photo by C&G Bartlett*

second overlooking Kathy's Pond.

- ◆ Five mile long auto tour route on the McCormack Unit. The loop allows visitors to see back sloughs, co-operative agreement agricultural circles, and native shrub-steppe areas of the refuge. The loop was designed with the intent to allow visitors wildlife viewing opportunities and a quality refuge experience from the comfort of their vehicles.
- ◆ Interpretive footpath, expected to open in 2005. The footpath will be part of the Morrow County Heritage Trail. When the trail opens, the refuge will allow foot and bicycle traffic through this section of the refuge thus providing the desired access for our pedestrian and non-motorized visitors. An elevated pathway on the dike will allow for particularly good wildlife viewing.

## Public Use Programs

### *Environmental Education*

The McCormack Unit is a popular destination for field trips/outdoor classrooms for local junior and senior high schools. Refuge assistance is provided on request for groups with special needs or interests.

### *Fishing*

Bass, walleye, sturgeon, crappie, bluegill, channel catfish, bullheads, salmon, and steelhead are popular species sought for fishing on Refuge waters in the Columbia River and its backwaters, as well as Refuge ponds and sloughs.

It is estimated there are over 20,000 fishing visits to Umatilla Refuge annually.

Fishing tournaments for bass and walleye are popular events held in Refuge waters. Special Use Permits are issued for tournaments held on Refuge waters and special provisions assist with minimizing wildlife disturbances.

### *Wildlife Observation*

Umatilla Refuge continues to attract a lot of attention from the wildlife watching public. The Refuge is open from dawn to dusk every day for wildlife viewing. Waterfowl concentrations and the mule deer herd on McCormack Slough account for many Refuge visits.

### *Non-Wildlife Dependent Recreation*

Pleasure boating and waterskiing continue to be popular activities on the Columbia River during the warmer months. Most of this activity is concentrated near boat launches bordering Refuge waters.

## Law Enforcement

Law enforcement is provided by federal and state Fish and Wildlife officers. Partnerships with the Oregon State Police, Washington State Patrol, Morrow County Sheriff's Department, and Benton County Sheriff's Department provide for additional coverage and emergency services.

## Special Events

### *National Wildlife Refuge Day*

Refuge Day is held each year to celebrate the National Wildlife Refuge System. In 2003, a hay ride was held one evening at dusk. Refuge staff pointed out wildlife and explained the hows and whys of Refuge operations. The Refuge's co-operative farmer and long time area resident explained farming principles and local history. This event is popular with family groups, especially those with small children.

### *Curlew Day*

Curlew Day is held on most years to celebrate the return of the long-billed curlew to the refuge. The birds migrate to the Refuge to mate and nest each spring on or about March 15.

## Youth Programs

During certain years when funding and staff is available, the Refuge hires community youths to serve in the Oregon Youth Conservation Corps. The OYCC performs light maintenance on the Refuge including litter pick-up, lawn cutting, painting, fence repair, and other seasonal maintenance jobs.

## Volunteer Programs

Volunteers assist with maintenance and public use programs on the Refuge.

## For more information

This fact sheet was authored by Art Shine, Outdoor Recreation Planner for the Refuge Complex.

Do you have questions? Please feel free to contact Art at Refuge headquarters at (509) 545-8588.